

Amendments to the Claim:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-10 (cancelled).

11 (previously presented). A lactic acid bacterium which is selected from the group consisting of *Lactococcus lactis* subspecies *lactis* strain DN221 deposited under the accession No. DSM 11034, a strain having all of the characteristics of DSM 11034, *Lactococcus lactis* subspecies *lactis* biovar *diacetylactis* strain DN227 deposited under the accession No. DSM 11040 and a strain having all of the characteristics of DSM 11040.

12-26 (cancelled).

27 (previously presented). A lactic acid bacterial starter culture composition comprising a lactic acid bacterium of claim 11.

28-34 (cancelled).

35 (currently amended). A pyruvate formate-lyase (Pfl) defective lactic acid bacterium which is

(I) *Lactococcus lactis* subspecies *lactis* strain DN221 deposited under the accession number DSM 11034,

(II) *Lactococcus lactis* subspecies *lactis* strain DN227 deposited under the accession number DSM 11040,

~~(III) a *Lactococcus lactis* mutant obtained by mutation of strain DN221, or~~

~~(IV) a mutant obtained by mutation of strain DN227, said bacterium having, relative to the wild-type strain from which it is derived, at least one of the following characteristics:~~

~~(i) essentially the same growth rate when cultivated under aerobic conditions in M17 medium,~~

~~(ii) a reduced growth rate or a reduced rate of acid production when cultivated under anaerobic conditions in M17 medium or in reconstituted skim milk (RSM),~~

~~(iii) essentially no production of formate under the anaerobic conditions of (ii),~~

~~(iv) a reduced production of ethanol or acetate under anaerobic conditions in M17 medium or in reconstituted skim milk (RMS) and/or~~

~~(v) an increased production of at least one α -acetolactate-derived metabolite when cultivated under anaerobic conditions in RSM,~~

~~wherein said mutant of (III) or (IV) is Pfl defective but not also Ldl-defective.~~

36-38 (cancelled).

39 (previously presented). The bacterium of claim 11 which is strain DN221 (DSM 11034) or a strain having all the characteristics of DSM11034.

40 (currently amended). The bacterium of claim 11 which is strain DN227 (DSM 11040) or a strain having all the characteristics of ~~DSM11034~~ DSM11040.

41-46 (cancelled).

47 (previously presented). A lactic acid bacterium which is *Lactococcus lactis* subspecies *lactis* strain DN225, deposited under the accession number DSM11038, or a strain having all of the characteristics of DSM 11038.